

Disability Doesn't Mean Inability: A Mock Campaign for Hillcroft Services

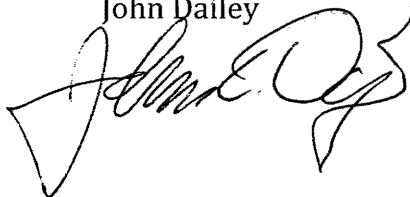
An Honors Thesis (ICOM 495)

by

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Dailey', with a large, stylized initial 'J' and a long, sweeping underline.

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Abstract

A lack of knowledge and exposure can often lead to unwarranted biases. This concept is often thought of in relation to race, sexuality or any group that can be stereotyped. Unfortunately, those with disabilities also fall subject to such biases. Hillcroft Services works with adults and children with disabilities on improving several aspects of their lives, in addition to spreading awareness in the community. The aim of this thesis was to develop a series of mock campaign ads that could serve as the first step in building awareness for how to interact with people with disabilities. The message should communicate that the key to creating equality is to show respect and acceptance towards one another.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Dr. John Dailey for advising me through this project. He believed in my project all along and put in a lot of time, offering his computer skills and knowledge to help me develop a digital slideshow for showcasing my work.

I would like to thank Brenda Williamson of Hillcroft Services for being more than helpful throughout this process. Her enthusiasm and support played a large role in my project's completion.

Author's Statement

I chose to focus my thesis on Hillcroft Services because it is an organization that deserves a lot of recognition. Hillcroft works with several clients consisting of children and adults with disabilities, helping them to improve their quality of life. In a world that is not always accepting of those who are different, the people of Hillcroft have opened their arms and embraced those differences.

Hillcroft has never had a marketing campaign, but they are working towards spreading their name and awareness throughout the community. Many people don't know how to interact with people with disabilities, which can often lead to misconceptions and discomfort for both parties. One of the biggest challenges organizations like Hillcroft face today is discovering ways to educate people so that a greater sense of equality, acceptance and respect may be formed. Until then, people continue to do things like use the word "retard" or avoid eye contact with people that have an obvious disability.

My advertising background led me to create a series of advertisements for a mock campaign to start spreading awareness. As discussed in my personal interviews, delivering an impactful message like this is very challenging when there is no audio or video to help portray a situation. Nevertheless, advertisements are a means of sharing a message, so I persisted along that path.

After meeting with my contact at Hillcroft, we decided that my thesis could focus on the work that their clients do with Cannon Industries. Cannon is a side service of Hillcroft that provides regular work for adults with disabilities. My research started with a few visits to the workshops where I talked with some clients and got a feel for what a typical workday was like for them. Next, I met with Paul Whittington, Vice President of Cannon Industries, for some insights on the work done at Cannon. Whittington emphasized the importance of realizing that people with disabilities work just as hard as anyone else, they earn a paycheck, and they contribute back to society by spending that money. This helped me develop the core theme of my project, which is equality.

I visited Hillcroft on one of their paydays where I was able to photograph the clients receiving their paychecks. It was evident that they are proud of the work they do and are happy to put in a full day's work, five days a week. The photos used in my ads are from this

day, with the exception of one photo that was provided to me from their summer camp at Isanogel.

After taking photos, I met with two other women who work for Hillcroft. The common message from both was that the focus should be placed on the clients' *abilities*, not their disabilities. This line stuck with me about eventually became a focus for each ad. I wanted to highlight the word "ability" to emphasize this point, and the tagline, "disability doesn't mean inability" became the core message of the mock campaign.

I was also given access to one of Hillcroft's training videos. Its focus was to help workers understand where the clients come from, and that they just want to be treated as equals. The idea was not to give pity or sympathy, but to get to know them just like one would with any other person. I took other key words or phrases from this video to decide on the messages in the individual ads.

Even though I took photos of the clients working, I decided that the campaign would come across stronger if just a face could be put with each message. The blue color was pulled from the photo of the man folding towels and carried throughout the rest of the ads, complemented by the yellow. I chose to design one full-size ad that could be used as a billboard and four other web-sized ads with the intent of using animation effects.

I was pleased with the outcome of the ads, but had to accept that ads like these would only be a small first step in the right direction. There is a lot of work to be done to improve the perception of people with disabilities, and it's a change that I hope I will be around to witness some day.

Works Cited

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Paul Whittington, Vice President of Cannon Industries. Personal interview. 9 Mar. 2011.